

HB 787 with HCA 1 -- SERVICE DOGS

SPONSOR: Sommer

COMMITTEE ACTIONS: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 11 to 1. Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Select Committee on Social Services by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill revises the term "service dog" to include a psychiatric service dog that is trained to do work or perform tasks that mitigate or assist with the difficulties of its owner with a psychiatric disability, medical condition, or developmental disability recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Tasks include alerting or responding to episodes such as panic attacks and anxiety, and performing other tasks directly related to the owner's specific psychiatric disability, medical condition, or development disability. Psychiatric disability, medical condition, or development disability includes autism, epilepsy, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, and other mental illnesses.

HCA 1: Changes "psychiatric service dog" to "mental health service dog," also known as "psychiatric service dog" and adds Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and invisible disabilities to the list of psychiatric disabilities, medical conditions, and developmental disabilities

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill is an addition to the current statute regarding service animals. Psychiatric service dogs are emotional support dogs and are already recognized by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Federal Aviation Administration. The goal of the bill is to ensure Missouri is recognizing psychiatric service dogs as service dogs, too. A therapy dog is different than a service dog. Service dogs are trained to perform specific tasks for individuals to meet their needs. Therapy dogs can guide a disoriented handler to safety, find a family member for assistance, and stop obsessive compulsive disorder actions.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Sommer; Genevieve Wiley; Jackie Lukitsch, NAMI St. Louis; National Association of Social Workers; and Missouri Association for Social Welfare.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.